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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0539

INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 3241

RUCNTXD/AMEMBASSY MAJURO PRIORITY 0101

RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY 4073

RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA PRIORITY 0211

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5571

RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2388

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 5086

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2684

RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 3227

RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 1252

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 002046

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/ANP, DRL, DRL/AWH
NSC FOR E.PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/05/2018

TAGS: PGOV PINS PHUM ID

SUBJECT: PAPUA -- TENSIONS CONTINUE

REF: A. JAKARTA 1943

B. JAKARTA 1393 AND PREVIOUS

JAKARTA 00002046 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Tensions continue to percolate in the Papuan region of eastern Indonesia. A court in Manokwari, the West Papua capital, has sentenced eight Papuans to eight months in prison for a March incident involving the raising of the separatist-linked "Morning Star" flag. Other flag-raising trials are ongoing. Papuan activists continue to object to the GOI proscription on the flag's use, claiming that it is only a cultural and regional symbol. END SUMMARY.

SENTENCING FOR EIGHT PAPUANS

¶2. (U) Tensions continue in Papua. In late October, Manokwari criminal court sentenced eight Papuan activists to eight months in prison for raising the banned "Morning Star" flag (ref B). The eight were part of a group of 12 arrested following a peaceful March 13 rally during which Papuan activists raised the flag (the GOI considers the flag a separatist symbol). The trial of the other four accused continues.

¶3. (C) Prosecutors had charged the Papuans with treason, which could have resulted in up to 20 years in prison. The court instead settled on the lesser charge of insulting the national unity of Indonesia. Lead defense lawyer Jan Christian Warinussy told poloff the results were "much better" than the defense team expected.

¶4. (C) Defense lawyers successfully exploited contradictions in witness testimony and problems with prosecution evidence. Warinussy explained that several witnesses made statements in court that conflicted with their earlier statements to police.

OTHER TRIALS

¶5. (C) Other flag-raising trials continue in several other

cities, including Jayapura (the capital of Papua Province) and Timika (the site of U.S. mining giant Freeport-McMoran's operations). Arrests also continue in flag-raising incidents. Police in Nabire, a town on the central Papuan coast, arrested four activists for their role in an October 15 incident. In Wamena, in the central highlands, a well-known student leader has been arrested for organizing an illegal demonstration.

¶6. (C) The recent spate of demonstrations is likely to continue (ref A). Papuans remain frustrated at the slow implementation of the region's Special Autonomy Law. Papuans also resent the GOI's recent decision to create additional districts in the region--something which many Papuans view as part of a Jakarta "divide and rule" strategy. The GOI asserts that the new regions were created in the interests of better governance. (Note: Mission will report more fully on the creation of the new regions in Papua and elsewhere via septel.)

CONTINUED TENSIONS

¶7. (C) Human rights contacts have told us they are pleased with--and surprised by--the relatively light sentences handed down in the Manokwari case. They note, however, that the individuals should never have been charged with a crime for peacefully expressing views by raising a flag which to them is only a cultural and regional symbol. Simon Morin, a Papuan member of the national House of Representatives (DPR), told poloff he expects the demonstrations to continue as long as development in Papua lags behind other regions and as long as Papuans feel that Jakarta does not listen to them.

JAKARTA 00002046 002.2 OF 002

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